

Washington, DC – Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) Chair Mike Honda (D-CA) today criticized Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) for the GOP's push to invoke cloture and limit debate on the nomination of several controversial federal judge nominees. Honda issued the following statement:

"Senators must not allow the majority party's unabashed power grab to succeed. Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) is expected to set a vote tomorrow morning on a motion to invoke cloture, and thus limit debate, on the nomination of Priscilla Owen to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Absent any compromise, if Senator Frist fails to secure the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture, he plans to trigger the "nuclear option" – a parliamentary maneuver that could abolish a Senator's right to filibuster against a judicial nominee.

The filibuster was envisioned 200 years ago by visionary leaders such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. This procedural safeguard ensures that every American has a voice in our government, and no single political party can ever have absolute control.

Through the centuries, the filibuster has protected the rights of the minority party against political over-reaching. Removing this important check now would violate Senate rules and upset our system of checks and balances.

By requiring 60 votes to end debate, the filibuster helps ensure that both parties work together to confirm fair and independent judges. Conservative Senate Republicans now want to scrap time-tested rules and give President Bush unprecedented executive power – the ability to hand out lifetime federal judgeships without bipartisan consensus. This is a gross abuse of power. Ultimately, conservative Republican leaders are seeking absolute power by commandeering the Supreme Court. If they can strip away the filibuster, President Bush will have an unimpeded path to confirming his most extreme Supreme Court nominees.

Tomorrow, every Senator has an opportunity to stand up for the Constitution and let George Bush and right-wing Republicans know that the power of the Senate is not theirs to abuse."

